

3/16/2009

Raised Bill No. 6678

**AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH LICENSING STATUTES  
An act to separate the licensing statute for Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists**

Good Morning Co-Chairs Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee,

The CT Academy of Audiology (CTAA) presents today to support our proposal to create two separate statutes that define the licensing of audiologists and speech language pathologists (SLP's). Currently, our joint statute is found under Title 20, Chapter 399 Sections 20-408 to 20-417.

Audiologists and speech language pathologists are the only professions in the state that share a licensing statute. When our licensing statute was first drafted in 1974 by audiologist Thomas Giolas and speech pathologist Marie Johnson the graduate and post graduate certification programs for both disciplines were accredited by the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association (ASHA). Certification from ASHA was a requirement on both a federal and local level to practice speech pathology or audiology.

In the years since, certification from ASHA is no longer a requirement to practice audiology (re: Social Security Act §1861 (11)(4)(b)). The respective scopes of practice and educational requirements for each profession have diverged, evolved and expanded. The profession of audiology has advanced its minimum education requirement to the doctoral level as of January 1, 2007.

The concept of a standalone statute for each profession was brought to the attention of the Department of Public Health Office of Governmental Affairs and the Department of Public Health Practitioner Licensing and Investigation Section in December 2008 by our academy. The proposal was well received as administratively it allows for streamlined and simplified responses to statute/licensure inquiries regarding each profession without the burden of filtering thru the other's language. It also allows for more efficient refinements in the years to come as our respective professions' scope of practice continue to evolve with advances in science, technology, and education.

Our proposal first takes the existing joint statute and removes all references to audiologists to create a standalone SLP statute. Secondly, we have taken the same statute and removed all references to SLP's to create the framework for a standalone audiologist statute. As you will note in the audiologist statute, we have not only removed references to SLP's but we have also refined the statute language in key areas that required updating as follows:

- the definition of an audiologist reflects our expanded scope of practice and is adapted from our national standards recommended by the American Academy of Audiology
- definitions already in the public health code are carried over to the statute for consistency and clarity of interpretation
- Audiology Assistant supervision and restrictions are defined
- Supervision of services by certified industrial audiometric technicians and occupational hearing conservationists by licensed audiologists or physicians is noted.

While the statute is open for revision, the CT Speech Language Hearing Association (CSHA) that represents primarily SLP's in the state, but also audiologists, is proposing a continuing education requirement for license renewal for SLP's. This is a concept that the CT Academy of Audiology supports not only for SLP's but also for audiologists. A recent CTAA sponsored poll of audiologists in the state revealed a majority consensus to add a CEU requirement and both CTAA and CSHA are actively working towards appropriate CEU language within the respective statute for each profession. The Department of Public Health Office of Governmental Affairs is also closely involved with this transition to a CEU requirement.

The audiologist in the state look forward to a standalone licensing statute that reflects the autonomous doctoring profession we have grown to be and anticipate continued dialogue with the DPH to make this a reality. Please feel free to contact us for any further information you may need.

Sincerely,

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